

NORTH PACIFIC RIGHT WHALE SURVEY 2002: Weekly Report 7/11/02
LEG 1 - GULF OF ALASKA TRANSIT

Leg 1 ended as we arrived Monday afternoon in Kodiak. The last few days were very eventful. Friday was our slowest day on the cruise, with only a few scattered Dall's porpoise and pinnipeds. Friday ended with a frustrating, exciting, and ultimately satisfying encounter with a sperm whale (we got our first biopsy sample of the cruise, thanks to Juan Carlos). We didn't get any whale feces in the boat this time, but we did get to see what whale flukes look like, up close and personal. Saturday was a beautiful day, and we saw our first Beaufort 0 in the Gulf of Alaska. More launches on sperm whales, but no luck. On Sunday, we found a HUGE group of Baird's beaked whales (~70) in slope waters off Kodiak. We launched on them and got 4 biopsies! After searching for most of the day for sperm whales, we followed that auditory trail for 15 miles and found several sperm whales. Bob took a long-range shot as it fluked (at 10:10 pm!). The bolt did not retain a sample, but Bob bagged a tiny bit of skin that was caught under the rubber bumper. That's 2 for the good guys. Monday morning found us on the shelf, heading into Kodiak. We encountered the usual shelf fauna, including humpbacks and a minke whale. We got 3 biopsies and complete photographs from a small group (~6) of transient killer whales and we got 2 biopsies and 3 photo-Ids from humpback whales.

Overall, this was a very successful week. The weather could hardly have been better. It was just like a survey in California, except warmer and calmer. We topped 211 sightings in a week, which must be a record (if you exclude harbor porpoise cruises). The new array was plagued by a few technical glitches, but overall tow noise was exceptionally low.

Date	Begin/End time position	Transect miles	Avg. Beauf
070502	0608 N53:02.08 W135:10.22	93.2nmi	4.0
	2005 N54:09.94 W138:40.87		
070602	0608 N54:50.15 W141:08.11	129.5nmi	1.7
	2300 N56:09.29 W144:47.79		
070702	0603 N56:42.62 W147:11.38	102.2nmi	2.4
	1759 N57:26.10 W150:15.58		
070802	0555 N57:16.25 W151:30.20	38.5nmi	1.9
	1103 N57:41.86 W152:06.74		

Code	Species	Tot#	Biopsy#	Photo#
37	killer whale	1	3	6
44	Dall's porpoise	49		
46	sperm whale	6	2	2
49	unidentified beaked whale	1		
51	unidentified Mesoplodon	1		
61	Cuvier's beaked whale	1		
63	Baird's beaked whale	1		
70	unidentified rorqual	1		
71	minke whale	1		
74	fin whale	4		
76	humpback whale	12	2	3
78	unidentified small whale	1		
79	unidentified large whale	2		
CU	northern fur seal	18		
EJ	Steller sea lion	1		
MA	northern elephant seal	1		
	OTHER	2		

TOTAL 103

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LEG 2 - RIGHT WHALE EFFORTS

We left Kodiak (the land of the 20 dollar pitcher of beer) in good conditions at 2000 on 9 July. This put us at Albatross Banks in the middle of the night. No effort that day – the time was spent training the new folk on our methods, WinCruz, the cameras, etc. Kate and Lisa threw a sonobuoy over at 0400 on the 10th. It worked for about an hour and a half but no detections. Visual efforts on the 10th were under very good conditions. There were lots of humpbacks about, especially in the evening. We launched the small boat after dinner and had good success. The small boaters got fluke photos for about 25 humpbacks and biopsies from five. They also got photos of five fin whales, with one biopsy. There were also six to eight humpback fluke photos taken from the Mac.

Another sonobuoy was deployed around 2300. This one worked all night and was monitored until 0600 on the 11th. Alas, only a few distant fin whales could be heard. The acousticians yawned and the 11th dawned clear and sunny, and the Beaufort bounced between 3 and 5 throughout the day. The cetacean highlight was a lone sperm whale that was chased and sampled. Apart from that, just scatterings of the usual suspects were seen over the course of the day. Now it is on to the Shumagins.

One situation that has come up involves repairs to the Mac and will no doubt affect our schedule. It seems the Mac has a small leak involving one of the props. The Coast Guard may make the ship to put into drydock for repairs prior to any other inport. This will definitely impact the cruise schedule, but it is too early to guess how. We'll know more when we know when and where (Ketchikan has been mentioned – not a good choice for our plans).

Date	Begin/End time position	Transect miles	Avg. Beauf
071002	0640 N57:54.14 W150:11.12	130.2nmi	2.5
	2159 N56:33.22 W153:15.63		

Code	Species	Tot#	Biopsy#	Photo#
22	Pacific white-sided dolphin	1		
44	Dall's porpoise	13		
70	unidentified rorqual	1		
74	fin whale	3		
76	humpback whale	23		
78	unidentified small whale	1		
79	unidentified large whale	3		
	OTHER	1		
	TOTAL	46		